

One Gospel

1. Intro

- Welcome back for a new year at C@P!
 - Pray you are rested and refreshed ready to serve Jesus ... the Maze family certainly are
 - It was a real privilege to go away on LSL together
 - Just want to say thank you for your kindness and generosity for us to be able to do that ... and thank everyone who covered, stepped up, filled in while we were away
 - We got to fellowship with other believers while we were away ... a few times in church plants like this
 - While that was great ... it made us miss C@P and want to be back
 - It's great to be back ... and I'm excited and looking forward to term and year ahead

- If you are new and have joined us over the Christmas New Year period – welcome
 - Wonderful you've been visiting
 - I pray you might choose to join us so that we might be able to encourage you in your faith wherever you are at ... that we might be a blessing to you and you to us

- Today we are beginning a new series – Vision 2020 ... and I'm praying this it will help prepare our hearts and minds for a big term of mission

- For those who are new ...
- **Our mission** here at C@P is that we live to be and make disciples of Jesus
 - That is ... our whole life ... our purpose ... our existence ... both as individuals and as a church is centered around living and growing as disciples of Jesus ... and actively seeking for others come to know Jesus as well

- **Our Vision** ... what we desire to see is ... all of Peakhurst and beyond transformed by the gospel ... the good news of Jesus

- To help us live this out ... term 1 is going to be a big term of mission
- Might recall from our Vision Sunday last November that later this term we're planning to run a week of mission

- During mission week we'll be joined by students from Moore College who will be partnering with all the churches across our region to support and partner with us
 - Our aim that week is to make 200+ connections with people in our suburb
 - With the aim of seeing many of those connections coming along to our Super Sunday service on 5th April
 - Our prayer is there will be lots of newcomers who will come along and here the good news of Jesus
 - The week after that is Easter ... where we pray that those who came to Super Sunday and others too will come again and hear the heart of the Christian message ... the death and resurrection of Jesus

- Closely aligned with that is another one of our goals ... which is to see 160+ new people visit church this year
 - That's people you and I invite to church who have never been before

- It's going to be an intense and busy term
- And so to prepare us for that ... I want us to turn to John 3 so we can begin the year reminding ourselves of the gospel
 - Because the gospel is at the heart of our mission
 - And the gospel is what will motivate us for mission

- Outline
 - The Gospel to Nicodemus
 - The Gospel Summary
 - A Perfect love
 - A Precious gift
 - A Pivotal response

PRAY

2. The Gospel to Nicodemus

- Jesus speaking with Nicodemus
 - Pharisee
 - Pharisees
 - were super religious
 - they followed the law meticulously
 - they generally rejected Jesus and all he had to say
 - But Nicodemus is different > intrigued, interested in Jesus > he wants to find out more

- And Jesus talks to him about entering into the KOG
- And in the course of the conversation, Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to enter into the KOG ... two things need to happen
- Firstly he says in v3
 - "... no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
- He says a similar thing in v5
 - "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit"
- Lots we could say here ... but basically Jesus is saying that ...
 - to become a Christian ...
 - to enter into eternal life ...
 - you need to be spiritually reborn
- That is ...
 - Just like our mum and dad needed to take the initiative for us to enter into the world
 - So, God by his Spirit needs to take the initiative for us to enter into the kingdom of heaven
 - A spiritual rebirth needs to take place and God is the one who makes that happen

Application

- Being born again ... is not necessarily about having some super religious experience where
 - Heavens open up > see Jesus > music is playing > light is shining > warm fuzzy feeling comes over you
 - That might happen > if it does let me know > I'd be fascinated!
- Being born again is normally a process of the Spirit working in you to help you come to understand and see who Jesus is and what he came to do
- You might be here this morning and recognise you're somewhere on that journey
 - The reason you're on that journey is because the HS is at work helping you to see things new ... to open your eyes to the truth
- Are you going to convert to Christianity today > maybe?
 - I pray you do
 - I pray that today you come to the point where you know in your heart and in your head that the gospel is true and that it stacks up

- Second thing Nicodemus needs to know about entering into the KOG is he needs to put his trust in Jesus
- Look at v14-15
 - *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man [Jesus way of referring to himself] must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*
- Let me unpack that
- Here Jesus is referring to an obscure event in the OT > Numbers 21
 - Ppl of God in desert > Egypt to Promised Land
 - Grumbling against God > failing to trust him and his word
- Because they rebelled against Him, God sent a plague of poisonous snakes upon them in judgment
 - Whoever was bitten by one of the snakes died
 - But in His mercy, God also provided a means of rescue
 - He commanded Moses to craft a bronze snake and 'lift it up' on a pole
 - Whoever looked to the snake lived
 - In other words, ... whoever trusted God and his means of rescue, was saved

- Jesus point is ... in the same way, whoever looks to him ... lifted up on the cross, will be saved ... they will not perish, but have eternal life

Application

- Now is important ... because remember Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus here
 - He's a super righteous dude
 - He's the Ned Flanders of the C1st
 - He's the super religious, morally upright, never been drunk, always gone to church type of guy
- And yet here's Jesus saying ... when it comes to entering into the KOG ... none of that matters ... none of that is enough
- Jesus is saying you need to be born again > you need to start again > you need to start at ground zero
- His religiosity, his goodness, his devotion, his piety ... aren't good enough to get him into the KOG
- The **only way** Nicodemus can enter into eternal life is
 - If he's born again and
 - He looks to Jesus death in the cross for his salvation

- And if Nicodemus ... can't do it on his own ... that means you and I have no chance!

- It doesn't matter about your
 - Credentials
 - Education
 - Morality
 - Social standing
 - Achievements
 - None of that matters!
 - None of that is going determine whether to get you into the kingdom or not
- Because ... like God's people in the desert, we're facing certain death for our rebellion against God
 - And without his gracious intervention ...we would face certain judgment
- Yet just like the situation in the desert, God provides us a means of rescue ... a means of grace
- And Jesus is saying ...
 - if you trust me
 - if you believe in me and God's plan to save you through my death on the cross ... then you **will enter** the KOG
- This is the what Christians call the gospel
 - Gospel = good news
- And because it's such good news ... the disciple John ... who's the author of this gospel ... spends the next few verses reflecting on what Jesus has just said to Nicodemus
 - He doesn't interject in the conversation
 - This is years later as he's writing the gospel ... and he gets to v15 and pauses
 - As though he knows this is such a profound truth that he feels compelled to unpack the significance of what Jesus has just said
- And what he says is so wonderfully simple and yet so deeply profound
- He says
 - *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
- I want to spend a few moments unpacking what John has to say here ... and then draw out some implications for us

3. A Perfect Love

- John starts by saying this gospel ... this good news ... starts with God's love for the world
 - It doesn't start with the world seeking God
 - It starts with God and his love for us

- And that's because ... on its own ... the world is unable to love God
 - World is fallen and rebellious and by nature will not and does not love God
- And yet despite this God chooses to show love to us and our world
 - That's why it's a perfect love
 - He loves us knowing ...
 - That it can't be reciprocated
 - That it can never be matched
 - That his love will be rejected
- And yet he loves the world he created
 - Not because of our loveliness but because God himself is love¹

- So the gospel is a reality ... because of God's great and perfect love for the world

4. A Precious Gift

- What does God do in his love?
- He gives the world a precious gift
 - v16 says ... he gave his one and only son

- **Kobe Bryant & Daughter**
- This week basketball Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash in LA
- If that's not sad enough ... what made it even more tragic was his teenage daughter was in the helicopter and was killed as well
- I don't know about you, but I reckon Kobe Bryant would have done anything for his daughter to be saved and spared the horror of such a death
- If you're a parent you'd want to the same ... you'd do anything to spare your children from that

- And yet the God's love for the world is so great ... that he **gave** his one and only son
 - Not accidentally

¹ 1 John 4:16

- Not reluctantly
- But intentionally and willingly
- For we see in v17 Jesus was sent into the world on a mission
 - He left his heavenly throne
 - He gave up the glory of heaven
 - And came into the world to be God's appointed means of mercy and save all who look to him lifted up on the cross
- And so, this perfect love of God is not
 - Vague and wishy washy like a pop song; or
 - Sentimental like a Valentine's Card
 - It's real and actual and it is clearly demonstrated in the sending of his Son into the world and to the cross
- And so, if you want to know how big God's love for the world is
- If you want to know how much God loves you
 - Then look at what happened on the cross
 - Meditate on that ... and consider **who** it is that was hung there ... and why
 - And then you will know for certain that God's love for you is as rock solid and as real as the person sitting next to you

5. A Pivotal Response

- However, this perfect love of God and this precious gift of a son requires a response
- We cannot continue to reject and turn our backs on God and expect to enjoy the blessings of his grace to us
- And so, John tells us there in v16 ... and he repeats it again in v18 ... that salvation and entry into eternal life comes to those who believe
 - "...whoever believes in him shall not perish, **BUT have** eternal life"
- Who are we to believe in? Jesus
- What are we to believe in?
 - That Jesus being lifted up on the cross pays for your sin has reconciled you back to God
- Now notice John says '**whoever** believes in him' shares in this blessing
 - That is ... this promise is for everyone
 - Doesn't matter whether you're Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Greek
 - Doesn't matter whether you're a factory worker or an executive

- Doesn't matter whether
 - you've lived a life of crime or
 - you're hearing this for the first time today
- **Whoever** believes in the Lord Jesus Christ **has** eternal life
 - The moment you put your trust in Jesus ... you have the sure and certain hope of
 - being born again,
 - entering into the KOG and
 - sharing in eternal life

- But friends ... don't take this response lightly
- Don't think that whether you believe in Jesus or not is inconsequential
 - Not like deciding which way to drive to the beach
 - Choosing what colour toothbrush you buy
 - Whether you prefer Android or Apple
 - Those things don't matter
- Because John makes it clear that how a person responds to Jesus is pivotal
 - Because while believing in Jesus leads to eternal life
 - Choosing not to believe in Jesus leads to eternal perishing
 - Believing in Jesus means you will be saved ...
 - Not believing in Jesus means you remain condemned
- There is no third option
- There's no sitting on the fence

- **Illustration – Book: Heads you Win**
- Story of a young boy called Alex fleeing Leningrad Russia 1968 with his mother after father is murdered by KGB
- At the docks they have a choice
 - Board a container ship bound for NYC
 - Or one bound for London
- What the book does is it charts his life in parallel as if he'd gone to both cities
- And through it you get to see how his life panned out based on that one choice he made decades before
- What you don't know until the very end ... is that one ends in a tragic death
- The decision he made back then had consequences for his life

- Like Alex in the book ... we have a choice to make that has consequences ... not just for this life ... but for eternity
- And therefore ... we cannot remain neutral to Jesus
 - Either we believe and are saved; or

- We don't and remain condemned

Application

- Friends that's the gospel that saves us
 - It's grounded in God's perfect love for a world that is against him
 - It's made possible through the giving of his precious Son Jesus to die on a cross
 - It assures us that all who believe in Jesus will not perish as they deserve but have eternal life
- If you're new to Christianity or here for the first time today ... I want to urge you to hear this good news and respond to it today
- Put your trust in Jesus and his death on the cross for you ...
 - and know for certain you will enter into the KOG and eternal life
 - and be spared the condemnation we all deserve
- And if you're a Christian person here today ... if you're a regular member here at C@P ... then friends I want you to grasp hold of the beauty and wonder of this verse ... especially for what we have planned this term and this year
- As we mission to reach all of Peakhurst and beyond with the good news of Jesus ... this is the gospel we proclaim
- In fact, this year the Anglican Churches across the Georges River Region are uniting together in a year of mission using the theme 'What is 3:16?'
- Of course, it's referring to John 3:16
- The most famous verse and yet one of the simplest verses in the Bible ...
- And yet as we've seen today ... it's one of the most profound verses of Bible that is able to clearly articulate the wonder and beauty of the gospel
- **Illustration – Greg Louganis 1984 Olympics**
- I remember watching Greg Louganis at the 1984 Olympics
- Greatest diver in history
- Doing the 10m platform ... and in the crowd a Christian person has positioned themselves in the camera background ... so that every time a diver was preparing to dive ... you could see this sign that simply said ... John 3:16
- And that 36 years ago ... and I still remember it
- And that's what we're hoping to achieve with What's 3:16?

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- Point is to get people curious ... asking this question and wanting to know the answer
 - We'll use banners at church and t-shirts when where doing church events and Facebook banners and whatever ... to pose the question
 - And then when your friends ask you "what's this 3:16 about?" ... you and I can share the gospel with them
 - Our goal this year is to see everyone in our churches memorise, learn and share the gospel at least once during the year using John 3:16
 - We're going to be doing more of that in GG's ... so make sure you get along this week so we can start preparing for that
 - How amazing would that be to have 1000's of Christians sharing the gospel with people in our region?!

 - During our mission week with the MTC students we're going to focus on three thing
 - Coffee cart at Gannon's Park each morning
 - Connecting with passers by, offering coffee, having a chat, wearing our What is 3:16? t-shirts and inviting them to Super Sunday and Easter
 - Door Knocking the local streets
 - Same thing
 - Connecting with people in our suburb, having a chat, wearing our What is 3:16? t-shirts and inviting them to Super Sunday and Easter
 - Pretty simple
 - And God willing ... sharing the gospel with people using John 3:16
 - Super Sunday & Easter
 - Two big days over two weeks
 - Praying that 200+ people we connected with over the week will come and visit church and hear the glorious news that God so loved the world, he sent his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life

 - On Vision Sunday I urged you to consider taking time off from work to come and be part of mission week
 - We'd love it if some of you could take the whole week off
 - Maybe you can't do that ... but you could take 2-3 days off
 - Can I urge you to make this week a priority as we mission together to see all of Peakhurst and beyond transformed by the good news of the gospel

 - Similarly, I want to urge you work your holiday plans this year so that you can be here for both our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services
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- So many newcomers visit us at that time of year
- It's one of our main opportunities for mission ... and ought to be one of the few times of year we are all on deck

- So plan to be here for Easter, plan to have some time off during mission week as we seek to engage our community and evangelise our contacts so that we might make 200+ connections that week

- You may be sitting there thinking ...
 - You're asking a lot Stu
 - Sounds like its going to be pretty full of this term ... I'm not sure I'm up for that

- That's why John 3:16 is so helpful for us when we feel like that
 - Because if we feel like this is asking a lot ... the gospel reminds us that so much more was asked of Jesus
 - Because what God the Father ask of Jesus?
 - He sent him into a world that hated him so he could be lifted up on a cross ... in order that you and I would not perish but have eternal life

- And if we feel the term of mission ahead is too intense and we're not sure we are up for it
 - The gospel reminds us that Jesus mission was far more intense
 - For at the cross he bore the condemnation and punishment from God that you and I deserved
 - And he did it because he loved lost people like you and me

- Our mission this term is to carry on that mission ... so that others who are lost might come to know the comfort, joy and peace of knowing ... that when they too believe in Jesus ... they will NOT perish ... but WILL HAVE eternal life

PRAY